

**BEFORE THE  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
DOCKET NO. 2021-17-C**

IN RE:

Amended Application of Sandhill Connexions, LLC for       )  
Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier in       )  
Certain Census Blocks in Chesterfield County for Purposes       )  
of Receiving Federal Rural Digital Opportunity Fund       )  
("RDOF") Support, and a Request for Waiver of S.C. Code       )  
Ann. Regs. 103-690.1.B and 103-690.C(b)       )  
\_\_\_\_\_)

**VERIFIED DIRECT TESTIMONY OF C. LEE CHAMBERS**

**ON BEHALF OF SANDHILL CONNEXIONS, LLC**

**FEBRUARY 16, 2021**

**VERIFIED DIRECT TESTIMONY OF C. LEE CHAMBERS**

**ON BEHALF OF SANDHILL CONNEXTIONS, LLC**

**Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS.**

A. My name is Christopher. Lee Chambers. My business address is 122 S. Main Street, Jefferson, South Carolina 29718.

**Q. ON WHOSE BEHALF ARE YOU PROVIDING YOUR TESTIMONY TODAY?**

A. I am testifying on behalf of Sandhill Connexions, LLC (“Sandhill” or the “Company”).

**Q. BY WHOM ARE YOU EMPLOYED AND WHAT IS YOUR POSITION?**

A. I am employed by Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Incorporated (“SCTI”), of which the Company is a wholly-owned direct subsidiary. I am President of the Company.

**Q. PLEASE OUTLINE YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSURES.**

A. I graduated from Clemson University with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

**Q. PLEASE OUTLINE YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY AND AT SANDHILL.**

A. I have over 27 years of experience in the telecommunications industry. I began my career in telecommunications as an engineer with STCI. After that, I became a principal customer service engineer with Siemens Telecom and then a senior manager with NuVox Communications, which was later acquired by Windstream. I returned to STCI in 2011 as CEO and General Manager of SCTI. Since becoming CEO, the Company has been very active in expanding fiber deployment to unserved areas of rural South Carolina. I have also been an active participant in local economic development, serving on both the

County Development Alliance and the local Chamber of Commerce and I am active in statewide industry organizations.

**Q. PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SANDHILL.**

A. Sandhill is a private company that was organized in the State of South Carolina on July 24, 2013 and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of STCI, a South Carolina corporation, also located at 122 S. Main Street, Jefferson, SC 29718. STCI is an incumbent local exchange carrier (“ILEC”) and telephone cooperative that has been providing local exchange service in South Carolina since 1955. Another affiliated company, Sandhill Communications, LLC (“Sandhill Communications”), was granted a certificate of public convenience and necessity to provide intrastate interexchange telecommunications services in the State of South Carolina, and has been providing those services since 1999. *See* Order Nos. 1999-618 and 1999-657 in Docket No. 1999-308-C. Sandhill was granted a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity by the Commission on December 20, 2016. *See* Order No. 2016-847 in Docket No. 2016-311-C.

**Q. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY TESTIFIED BEFORE STATE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSIONS?**

A. Yes, before the South Carolina Public Service Commission in Docket No. 2016-311-C.

**Q. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY TESTIFIED BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION?**

A. Yes, in Docket No. 2016-311-C with regard to Sandhill’s application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to provide facilities-based and resold local and interexchange voice services, and for Alternative Regulation pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. Sections 58-9-575 and 58-9-585 within certain areas of the State of South Carolina.

**Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?**

A. I am testifying in support of the Application of Sandhill, as amended, for designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier (“ETC”) in certain census blocks in Chesterfield County (the “Funded Area”) for purposes of receiving federal Rural Digital Fund (“RDOF”) support, and in support of a request for waiver of S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 103-690.1.B and 103-690.C(b) (the “Application”), which was filed with the Commission on January 6, 2021, with an amended Application having been filed with the Commission on February 4, 2021, so that Sandhill may receive federal universal service support under Sections 214 and 254 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and pursuant to the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) RDOF Phase I auction. As explained in detail in the Application filed in this docket, which is attached hereto, and incorporated herein by reference, granting Sandhill’s request for designation as an ETC in the Funded Area not later than June 6, 2021, so that Sandhill may submit to the FCC an Order from the Commission granting ETC designation in the Funded Area by the FCC’s June 7, 2021 deadline, would serve the public interest by allowing Sandhill to use federal funding to bring robust broadband service to certain areas of the State of South Carolina.

**Q. DOES SANDHILL SATISFY ALL OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR DESIGNATION AS AN ETC?**

A. As explained in detail in the Application, Sandhill meets all of the federal requirements for designation as an ETC for RDOF Phase I purposes. Additionally, Sandhill meets all of the state-specific requirements for designation as an ETC with two exceptions, for which Sandhill has requested waivers. First, Sandhill requests a waiver of the requirement to submit a two-year plan pursuant to R. 103-690.1.B. In lieu of filing the

1 two-year plan at the state level, and consistent with the FCC's waiver of similar federal  
2 requirements, Sandhill will make available to the Commission and the Office of  
3 Regulatory Staff all reports it is required to file with the FCC in connection with the  
4 RDOF Phase I funding for the Funded Area. Second, Sandhill requests a waiver of R.  
5 103-690.C.(b) to the extent it would prohibit designation of Sandhill as an ETC in an area  
6 smaller than a wire center. As explained in the Application, the FCC has established a  
7 mechanism to ensure the deployment of broadband to unserved areas. It has done so by  
8 undertaking a granular analysis, at the census block and location level, to target funding  
9 to such areas. If the Commission were to deny Sandhill the designation it requests at the  
10 census block level, federal funding would not be made available to Sandhill to serve the  
11 Funded Area. Therefore, it is in the public interest to grant the requested waiver of that  
12 portion of R. 103-690.C.(b) that provides that the Commission shall not designate an  
13 ETC service area smaller than an entire wire center.

14 **Q. HAS SANDHILL PROVIDED THE CERTIFICATIONS REQUIRED BY**  
15 **COMMISSION REGULATIONS?**

16 A. Yes. Attached to the Application in this matter is the sworn Affidavit of Christopher Lee  
17 Chambers, an officer of the Company, certifying that the Company acknowledges that the  
18 FCC may require it to provide equal access to long distance carriers in the event that no  
19 other ETC is providing equal access within the service area; that the Company does offer  
20 or will offer the services supported by federal universal service support by using its own  
21 facilities or a combination of its own facilities and resale of another carrier's services;  
22 and that it does or will advertise in a media of general distribution the availability of such

1 services, including Lifeline services and the applicable charges. This certification meets  
2 the requirements of Commission Reg. 103-690.C.(a)(5)-(7).

3 **Q. WILL GRANTING THE APPLICATION SERVE THE PUBLIC INTEREST?**

4 A. Yes. Sandhill's designation as an ETC for the Funded Area will allow it to build out  
5 unserved areas using federal funding, bringing the benefits of high-speed broadband to  
6 these areas. Accordingly, it is in the public interest to designate Sandhill as an ETC in  
7 the RDOF Phase I Funded Area.

8 **Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR DIRECT TESTIMONY?**

9 A. Yes.

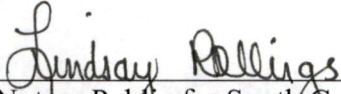
VERIFICATION OF CHRISTOPHER LEE CHAMBERS

I, Christopher Lee Chambers, first being duly sworn, depose and say that I am President of Sandhill Connexions, LLC, and that I have read the foregoing pre-filed Direct Testimony and know the contents thereof, and that said contents are true.



Christopher Lee Chambers

SWORN to before me this 11<sup>th</sup> day of  
February 2021.



Notary Public for South Carolina

My Commission expires: May 28, 2030

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA                    )  
                                                          )     CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE  
COUNTY OF LEXINGTON                    )

The undersigned, Carrie L. DeVier, hereby certifies that she is employed by the law firm of Herman & Whiteaker, LLC as attorneys for Sandhill Connexions, LLC and that she has caused the Verified Direct Testimony of Christopher Lee Chambers in Docket No. 2021-17-C to be served by United States Postal Service, first class postage prepaid and affixed thereto, and addressed to the following on February 16, 2021:

C. Lessie Hammonds  
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Carrie L. DeVier